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FOR INFORMATION

STATEMENT OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE ON UNICEF TO THE UNICEF EXECUTIVE BOARD AT ITS ANNUAL SESSION, 2-6 JUNE 1997

1. The NGO Committee on UNICEF, which is formally composed of 126 international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with UNICEF and works with numerous national and regional NGOs, would like to speak to two issues.

2. First, it would like to express its support for the United Nations reform process. Clearly there is a need for greater efficiency, more accountability to stakeholders and beneficiaries, and strengthened inter-agency cooperation.

3. On the other hand, we firmly believe that there is a strong need for an independent voice for children within the United Nations system. The existence of UNICEF with its distinct mandate is imperative at this critical juncture in history. For 50 years, UNICEF has been the leading international agency which works exclusively for children and women. The public recognition that it has built up is a precious asset to the whole UN system. At this moment, the voice and needs of children at the global level are at grave risk of being seriously eroded. The effectiveness of UNICEF as a leading moral authority for children - who require an informed and articulate voice at the international level - must be safeguarded. UNICEF has a unique capacity to empathize with the creative ideas and actions of NGOs working for children around the world and to bring them to international significance.

4. Secondly, at a time of changing roles and relationships between governments, private sector and civil society, we suggest that UNICEF address the policy significance of this partnership. When new policy directions or programme strategies are being formulated, the views of civil society should be considered whether at the country, regional, or headquarters level.

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* E/ICEF/1997/13 and Corr.1.

5. We note that the Management Excellence Programme (E/ICEF/1997/CRP.15) has recommended an increased commitment to working with partners at the most senior level. We would therefore be interested in learning what steps UNICEF plans taking to demonstrate its high-level commitment to partnerships with NGOs.

6. The NGO Committee on UNICEF would also like to express its appreciation to UNICEF's NGO section and many other UNICEF offices for their role in furthering a close, participatory partnership. Now, more than ever before, civil society needs strong and distinct counterparts in UNICEF.

Thank you, Madame President.